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THE POST'S OPINION

Turner scores good marks

WHEN ADM. STANSFIELD TURNER was named by President Carter as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, this newspaper found the appointment disquieting.

The President had announced his intention to appoint an "outsider" to let some needed fresh air into the supersecret activities of the CIA. And we were frankly skeptical about a career military man being able to achieve what Mr. Carter was seeking: a shakeup of the CIA to make it more accountable to the American people.

Now that he has been in office for six months, it is possible to make an initial assessment of Turner's stewardship.

In general, we are heartened. While he has encountered problems — notably ongoing rivalry involving the CIA and the State and Defense Departments, as reported earlier on this page by columnist Joseph Kraft — Turner has earned good marks for his performance at an extremely difficult post.

First off, he deserves credit for making himself available for regular reports to Congress and to the press on his efforts to reform the CIA, and he has been unusually candid on matters involving flagrant abuses by the agency. This has made

his pledges that these abuses will not be repeated more believable.

Turner was unable to convince President Carter — in the face of objections by the Defense and State Departments — that all the government intelligence agencies ought to be consolidated under his (Turner's) direction. But Turner did succeed in gaining control over all intelligence budgets, reportedly totaling about \$7 billion. This ought to improve coordination among agencies, and streamline the accountability process.

Turner also moved decisively to reduce the "bloated" staff and budget of the CIA. He reported that the home office roster will be cut by about 800 persons, from a staff estimated at between 1,200 and 1,400.

Much of the overstaffing occurred during the Indochina war, and Turner no longer sees a need for it.

A number of the points about his reorganization of the CIA were made at a breakfast conference with members of the press, at which Turner was not reluctant to speak for the record.

This in itself is a hopeful sign that he is aware of his responsibility to make the intelligence community more accountable to the American people.